

GLR Learning Tuesdays Webinar
Our Story: Early Childhood Matters With Story County Reads
A Crucible of Practice Salon
February 9, 2021
Moderator & Presenter Bios

Malai Amfahr, Story County Reads Director, United Way of Story County, Moderator



Malai has over 18 years of experience working in advocacy and program management serving children and youth. She joined the team at United Way of Story County in 2017 where she oversees the "Story County Reads" coalition associated with the National Campaign for Grade Level Reading. Her primary area of work involves leading teams using systems thinking and the collective impact model, analyzing programs implemented by partners, community and coalition building, public speaking, youth engagement and volunteer management. Malai is the co-chair of Early Childhood Iowa's Equity Advisory Committee where she leads a state level team with ensuring equity guiding principles are infused across the greater network. She is also a member of Mid-Iowa Health Foundation's HealthConnect Fellowship where she is concentrating on a project involving equity in education. Malai has facilitated workshops and conducted presentations at national, state and local conferences through NeighborWorks America, the Iowa Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Iowa Afterschool Alliance, Early Childhood Iowa, Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children (Iowa AEYC), Iowa State University and United Way of Story County.

Constance "Connie" Beecher, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Iowa State University



Constance Beecher, Associate Professor, School of Education at Iowa State University is an Early Intervention researcher and educator with an emphasis on language and literacy development. Her work is centered in the context of community-based research. It involves developing, evaluating, and disseminating language and literacy interventions for young children that can be implemented by or for parents, teachers, and caregivers in community settings. Dr. Beecher's faculty position includes an Extension and Outreach appointment, where she oversees Literacy programming for the state Extension system. The Small Talk project (and STARS) is a prevention program aimed at teaching parents/families to read and talk with their children. See more about her research here: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Constance_Beecher

Sadie Bohr, Healthy Futures and Nest Program Coordinator, YSS



Sadie has been with YSS for nearly 5 years. She graduated from the University of Northern Iowa in May of 2015. Her first four years at YSS was in the role of FaDSS Specialist. She was promoted to her current position in April 2020.

Lynne Carey, Board of Directors member, Raising Readers in Story County



Lynne recently retired from a 36-year career at Ames Public Library (APL) as the Executive Director. At APL, Lynne developed a strong passion for community building through collaboration. She has experience with strategic planning, human resource management, budgeting, fundraising, programming, and policy development. While literacy efforts of every stripe are important to Lynne, she believes that a focus on early literacy and parent education is vital. She now serves as board member with Raising Readers in Story County. Lynne received a BS from ISU in psychology and women's studies. She is one of the rare Story County natives who stayed in the community. She and her spouse, Navid Emami, live in Nevada in Lynne's childhood home with two pampered felines, and appreciate the small town living that Iowa offers.

Nicole "Nikki" Fischer, ECI Area Director, BooSt Together for Children



Nicole "Nikki" Fischer is a Spring 2020 graduate of Iowa State University with her BA in Liberal Arts and Science. Prior to joining Early Childhood Iowa, Nikki had worked at Wells Fargo for 12 years while going back to college to finish her degree. She is an avid volunteer and works in the community supporting organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Meals from the Heartland, Toys for Tots, and school functions with our local district. Nikki was recently selected as one of the 2020 Story County volunteers for the ASSET Board (Analysis of Social Services Evaluation Team). She also serves on the Nevada Planning and Zoning Commission and represents as a Boone County Board Member of the CICS Regional Adult Advisory Committee for mental health. Nikki is very active and enjoys outdoor activities. She has run in the Women's Half Marathon in Des Moines, ran several 5K's supporting many charities over the years, and attempts golfing when she gets the chance. Nikki loves to be around water; she could swim or fish all day. Her and her family take yearly trips to Canada to fish and enjoy the lakes and farm ponds around town when they have a chance between the children's sporting events.

Jessica Miller, 1st Five Site Coordinator, MICA



Jessica has been working for Mid-Iowa Community Action, Inc (MICA) since 2006, initially working in the WIC program providing families in need with WIC services and connecting them to community resource information. In 2011, she decided to take a break to go back to school to earn a second Bachelor's degree in English and Technical Communications to compliment her degree in Sociology. In 2015 she joined the 1st Five team back at MICA as a Developmental Support Specialist, working with providers to connect children birth to five and their families with referrals for early intervention services and resources within the community. She moved out of the role of Developmental Support Specialist to the position of 1st Five Site Coordinator in November 2020, working more closely with the provider side of the program to make sure that clinics have the support and services they need to make developmental screenings and surveillance available to families. She joined the Story County reads team in December of 2020.